struck vital assets like oil, gas, coal and other minerals in the are across Kutch/Barmer and they are now in the process of exploiting it.

(b) Due to improvement of logistics the threat potential from across the border may increase.

(c) In order to tackle the situation effectively and protect interest of the country, five additional battalions of BSF were raised during 1994-95 and deployed on the Rajasthan and Gujarat border. The Water Wing of BSF and coastal patrolling by Coast Guard and Gujarat Police have also been strengthened and feasibility studies to errect fencing/flood lighting on Gujarat border are also being taken up. Security forces are constantly making assessment of the threat-perception in this sector and remedial measures are taken from time to time.

Inquiry Commission on Babri Masjid

1621. SHRI MUKHTAR ANIS : Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Commission of Inquiry on the Demolition of the Babri Masjid in December 1992, has submitted its report;

(b) if so the salient features of the report; and

(c) the number of cases under prosecution and under investigation, separately with their present status, case-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI MOHD. MAQBOOL DAR) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) Independently, on the basis of the investigations carried out by it into the offences connected with the demolition of the disputed structure on 6th December, 1992, etc., CBI had filed a combined chargesheet against 49 persons before the Special Court at Lucknow. All these cases have been committed for trial to the Court of Special Additional Session Judge, Lucknow.

Rhino

1622. SHRI KRISHAN LAL SHARMA : Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state :

(a) whether one 'horned rhinos' in the country are on the verge of extinction;

(b) if so, their present number as compared to last three years;

(c) whether poaching is one of the causes of extinction of these species; and

(d) if so, the steps the Government propose to take to end poaching and strengthen other laws for protecting the range species like 'one horned rhinos'?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (CAPT. JAI NARAYAN PRASAD NISHAD) : (a) and (b). No, Sir. Although the rhinoceros is an endangered species, it is not on the verge of extinction as there are several populations distributed in the states of Assam, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh. The present estimated population of rhinos as compared to the last three years are given below:

Year	1989	1991	1993	1995
Population	1591	1567	1498	1566

(c) the main cause for the decline of rhino population during the period was due to a higher incidence of poaching in the year 1992 and 1993 which has been contained largely during the last two years.

(d) The steps taken by the Government for protection and conservation of rhinos and other rare species are given below :

(i) Rhino is placed in Schedule I of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 thus getting the highest level of protection against hunting and commercial exploitation.

(ii) India ia a party to the Convention on International Trade in endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and abides by the regulations of International trade in endangered species of animals and articles. Under the provisions of the convention, rhino is under Appendix I of CITES which bans international trade in the species, products and derivatives.

(iii) Cooperation of Police, BSF, DRI, Customs, Army and other enforcement agencies is also taken, as and when required, in apprehending the poachers and illegal traders.

(iv) With a view to providing alternative home for Rhinos and also rehabilitating them in their erstwhile habitat programme for 'Rehabilitation of Rhinos' has been started in Dudhwa National Park and Katerniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary of Uttar Pradesh.

(v) A network of 5 wildlife sanctuaries and 4 national parks has been set up for conservation of the species and its habitat. Financial assistance is provided by the Central Government for development of these national parks and sanctuaries, on request from the State Governments.

(vi) There is a scheme for payment of rewards to the informers, which among other things, helps in getting intelligence regarding smuggling of wildlife products.

(vii) Hunting of wild animals included in Schedules I to IV of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, has been banned by law.